DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 093 042 EA 006 224

AUTHOR	Coats, William D.
TITLE	Statement for State Department of Education Hearing on Accountability.
INSTITUTION	Kalamazoo Public Schools, Mich.
PUB DATE	Mar 74
NOTE	4p.; Related documents are EA 006 221 through 223 and EA 006 225. See also American School Board Journal; v161 n2-4 Feb-Mar-Apr 1974
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Guides; Behavioral Objectives; Board Administrator Relationship; *Educational Accountability; Educational Objectives; Elementary Schools; Evaluation; Management Information Systems; Performance Contracts; *Performance Criteria; *Public Education; Secondary Schools; State Departments of Education; Superintendents
IDENTIFIERS	*Kalamazoo; Michigan

ABSTRACT

Accountability as a concept refers to little more than "common sense" management wherein outcomes of various programs and practices are measured, and this information is used as feedback for making appropriate changes and recording progress. The core of the Kalamazoo accountability model is the development of a management information system. (Author/WM)

ED 093042

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Statement for State Department of Education Hearing on Accountability
William D. Coats
Superintendent
Kalamazoo Public Schools
March 14, 1974

On behalf of the Kalamazoo Public Schools I would like to present for your consideration the following statement regarding accountability in public education. It must be recognized that there is a tremendous difference between accountability as a concept and the way it is defined at the operational level or put into practice. We believe it is imperative that analyses and summaries of these statewide hearings put the whole issue of accountability into some common frame of reference in terms of definition and operationalization. In our judgment accountability as a concept refers to little more than "common sense" management wherein outcomes of various programs and practices are measured and this information is used as feedback for making appropriate changes and recording progress. To present a more clear picture of how accountability is practiced in the Kalamazoo Public Schools, I now digress briefly to share with you portions of a Position Statement presented previously to the Kalamazoo community.

Portions of Superintendent's Position Statement
September 7, 1973

> ...the Kalamazoo Public Schools has an overriding commitment to the implementation of comprehensive accountability models. Our annual performance objectives describing the specifics of these models are listed in a several page document entitled *1973-74 Performance Objectives for Kalamazoo Public Schools* dated September 7, 1973. For those not having the time or interest to consider the detail presented in that document, we discuss below a summary of the part of our educational philosophy on which the performance objectives are based.
>
> We view the appropriate management structure for the Kalamazoo Public Schools as being analogous with that of a successful corporation. Under this analogy school taxpayers are to the school system as stockholders are to the corporation. In a like manner the Board of Education serves a function similar to that of a Board of Directors, the Superintendent has the management and leadership responsibilities held for

EA 006 224

the corporation president, and all other school administrators constitute the management team, thereby assuming leadership responsibilities in the various units, departments and buildings which are supportive of the system-wide management effort. It should be understood that we do not view students as our products. Rather, students are the consumers of our products which in turn are the learning experiences and opportunities available to them. The value or quality of these products may be reflected by the resultant student growth.

We recognize the negative features of the profit motive normally associated with the corporate structure in this country and the ineffective practices of many corporate managers. However, certain management concepts have been shown to be extremely effective. We believe the application of these exemplary concepts in an educational environment will improve the quality of educational offerings. There will be occasional instances of adversary situations between management and the various collective bargaining units if we are to fulfill our charge of producing for this community the best possible educational product. Nevertheless, we assume that one common objective of all school personnel continues to be the maximization of student learning, and we challenge all groups to work together with us to meet this worthy goal. Of course, ultimately the classroom teacher is the most important element in terms of the extent to which this goal is attained.

Although our objectives are many, we view ourselves basically as an academic institution. We have taken seriously our responsibility to help all young people in this school system to develop the basic skills and the basic understandings necessary to compete in this society for jobs and for higher education regardless of race, creed or sex. To achieve this end classroom environments must be conducive to learning, well organized and friendly. Furthermore, every student must be guaranteed the right to attend school without threat to safety or fear of physical violence.

Within this framework of academic emphasis we view reading to be our highest single priority. Expressing oneself in the English language in both written and oral forms and developing the facility to work with and understand mathematical concepts follow closely behind reading as objectives which we will meet to a minimum acceptable level of performance regardless of mitigating circumstances. Beyond the achievement of these minimum objectives in the area of basic academics we must develop standards of academic excellence which encourage students to progress on an individual basis as rapidly and as far as possible. While articulating a basic academic thrust we recognize the importance of student growth in the areas of attitudes and motivation. We are expanding our efforts in this area and certainly do not view attitudinal growth to be in conflict with academic growth. Research indicates that academic success generally has a positive effect on student motivation and attitudes.

Accountability in the Kalamazoo Public Schools is a reality with this administration. It permeates and provides direction for our entire system. It is an operating model requiring extensive data collection and analysis for the evaluation of personnel, programs and practices. The reasons for collecting these data are to maximize student learning

> while at the same time allowing us to provide school patrons with information regarding the educational return for their tax dollar, to determine student performance levels in all areas, to evaluate the performance of personnel throughout the system, and to allow us to weigh fiscal considerations against educational benefits as an important criterion in all decision making...

The core of our accountability model is the development of a Management Information System. In order to effectively manage an organization as complex as the Kalamazoo Public Schools we must have an extensive data base which allows us to monitor outcomes of various programs and practices and to use the information so gathered as feedback for appropriate individuals throughout the system so that we all can do a better job. In order for this information to be useful, that is accessible and retrievable, it must be computerized. At the present time we have or are collecting data which indicate specific performance objectives and the extent to which these objectives are met as well as ratings of various relevant reference groups for professional staff throughout the system. Salary adjustments for administrators are based on performance as reflected by these measures. The management information base for teachers includes extensive information on student achievement, student reactions to the teaching/learning process, peer ratings, self-analyses and administrator judgments. At appropriate times throughout the school year this information is presented to teachers on an individual basis so that the teachers in turn can determine how students on an individual basis are growing in both cognitive and affective areas. Such extensive data collection and computerization sometimes create the image of dehumanizing or mechanizing the educational process, but, on the contrary, such a conceptual and technical data base is a necessity if we are ever to meet and fulfill our mandate of individualizing and personalizing instruction by challenging each student to grow to his or her fullest potential.

It is important to understand that educational accountability cannot be traced solely to any employee or employee group. For example, it is

ridiculous to attempt to hold individual teachers solely accountable for student achievement. Student learning is a function of heredity and environment. We have no control over heredity, and even environment is a function of a complex interaction of numbers of factors including administrative leadership, teacher effectiveness, student effort and home environment. In dealing with the issue of accountability we must "carve out" those components for which these various groups have primary responsibility and then define accountability in a manner which truly reflects their various contributions.

Tragically, much of the controversy and accompanying anxiety regarding accountability is based on a fear or mistrust of how accountability models might be used. Many fear that accountability may become a tool to arbitrarily and capriciously dismiss professional school employees. We must not allow this fear to be sufficient reason for not moving ahead in terms of guaranteeing minimum learning outcomes for all students and beyond that working toward academic excellence and career preparation. However, this fear should not be ignored and we must demonstrate through our actions as school management that accountability data are always used in a positive, constructive way and never in a manner which would reinforce the fears mentioned above. We believe we are demonstrating such positive use of accountability information through our practices in Kalamazoo. However, it would be desirable if the State Department of Education could develop in the near future certain safeguards which protect professional educators from unfair applications of accountability.